

THE DAYTONA BEACH NEWS-JOURNAL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR and COMMUNITY VOICES FOR 2014:

In the section below, the Letter at the top of the page is the most recent.

December 18, 2014

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20141218/OPINION/141219450/1031/OPINION02?Title=Letters-to-the-editor-for-Thursday-December-18-2014>

ART HAS ECONOMIC VALUE

Recently, hundreds of guests were introduced to art galleries along A1A from Flagler Beach to The Hammock. And while the cold, rainy and windy weather kept some people at home, those that came out to the Holiday Flagler Art and Wine Shuttle were anxious to see what the local art community had to offer.

Our guests were introduced to galleries that they only passed by; Ocean Art Gallery, Down by the Sea, Gallery of Local Art (GOLA), Flagler Beachfront Winery, Pierce Art Studio, Art LaMay Gallery, Hammock Wine and Cheese Shoppe, I AM ART/Rachel and Friends and The Baliker Gallery. They saw a variety of art.

The event validated that there is a local interest in culture. It also demonstrated the value that the art community can bring to the area's economic development. Guests came from Flagler and Volusia counties, as well as Gainesville, Leesburg and Orlando. We demonstrated that "If you build it, they will come."

Flagler County has a lot to offer locals and tourists. We recognize the value of national sport programs. But we shouldn't lose sight of the resources and talents we have in our own backyard. The arts can bring an economic boost to Flagler County. Nationally, the arts are an economic force. In 2013, the National Arts Index of Americans for the Arts reported that there was \$153 billion in consumer spending for the arts. Wouldn't it be great to see more of that coming to our economically challenged community?

We thank guests of the Holiday Flagler Art and Wine Shuttle and encourage you to speak out for the area arts. It will provide opportunities for you to see still more of our area's cultural gems. And in doing so, we are making our community richer by establishing it as an art destination for visitors coming from across the state, country and around the world.

Linda Sanders and Renny Roker

Flagler Beach

Sanders and Roker own L and R Presents, which produced the Holiday Flagler Art and Wine Shuttle.

December 6, 2014

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20141206/OPINION/141209660/1031/OPINION02?Title=Letters-to-the-editor-for-Saturday-December-6-2014>

JUSTICE CARRIES A PRICE TAG

I want to thank The News-Journal for the Dec. 1 editorial, “Level the playing field in the civil justice system.”

Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida is a nonprofit law firm that provides access to justice for low-income people. We are continually scrambling for resources to try to meet the overwhelming need in our communities for help with civil legal problems related to basic needs such as food, shelter and safety. In Volusia and Flagler counties, there are more than 143,000 low-income residents who are eligible for our services, but we can only serve a small fraction, about 2,300 a year. These are seniors, veterans, persons with disabilities — often our neighbors, co-workers, family and friends — who are facing major life issues such as losing a home to foreclosure, consumer scam rip-offs, or domestic violence. The law provides remedies in these types of cases, but remedies are meaningless if you can’t enforce them. CLSMF is usually the only help available for those who cannot afford an attorney. Unlike in criminal court, there is no right to a lawyer in civil cases.

Justice in America is too important to be threatened by a lack of resources. If we want order in our society, we must support a system that enables citizens to resolve their disputes through a fair and orderly process.

Without access to civil legal help, all society pays the price.

Bill Abbuehl

Abbuehl is executive director of Community Legal Services of Mid Florida

Daytona Beach

COMMUNITY VOICES. September 21, 2014

Former candidate: I had no connection to Waverly

SHANNON MCLEISH

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20140921/OPINION/140929959/1029?Title=Former-candidate-I-had-no-connection-to-Waverly>

Solution to homelessness could turn on the details

I appreciate The News-Journal’s coverage of homeless issues, both through Andrew Gant’s well-researched article, and through The News-Journal’s insightful editorial. Some correction is necessary to statements made by Lisa Hamilton, executive director for the Volusia Flagler County Coalition for the Homeless .

As a concerned citizen and member of both the Continuum of Care committee and the Ranking and Review Committee charged with reviewing applications for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funding, I have not only a right, but also a responsibility to question the lack of transparency in the coalition and Continuum of Care,

and how approximately \$3.1 million a year in taxpayer money is being spent to deal with the growing problem of homelessness.

Ms. Hamilton inappropriately canceled the public CoC meeting, stating that she had been told H.O.M.E. of Daytona Beach planned a protest. As Brad Carter and Edward Davis, president and vice president of H.O.M.E. have noted, that organization had no intention of disrupting any meeting and had actually been scheduled to make a presentation asking the membership of the CoC to endorse a “homeless bill of rights.” Ms. Hamilton’s actions prevented members of the continuum from expressing their concerns, in a proper manner, to their fellow CoC members about how the CoC is governed.

The Continuum of Care is the entity very clearly designated by law as holding all planning, oversight, and funding responsibilities. (HUD rules, 24 CFR 578, “Establishing and Operating the CoC,” Subparts B, C: “In order to be eligible for funds under the Continuum of Care program, representatives from relevant organizations within a geographic area must establish a CoC.”)

“The three major duties of a CoC are to: 1) operate the CoC; 2) designate a (homeless management information system) for the CoC; and 3) Plan for the CoC. In addition, each CoC is responsible for establishing and operating a centralized or coordinated assessment system. ... Continuums are also responsible for preparing and overseeing an application for funds.” (45423). “The continuum retains all of its responsibilities even if it designates one or more eligible applicants ... to apply for funds ... this includes approving the CoC application” (45429).

It is important to note that the CoC is not the same as the coalition and the coalition cannot serve as, or be in charge of, the CoC (45429). Very simply put, the Continuum of Care is all of the relevant parties in a geographic community as it relates to homelessness, including hospitals, schools, universities, city and county government, law enforcement, businesses, advocates, the local housing authority, service agencies, religious organizations, and the homeless themselves (45427). The CoC is also supposed to establish its own board, free from conflicts of interest, and its own governance charter (45445).

A primary reason we have not made significant progress toward ending homelessness in our community, despite being in year eight of the 10-year plan to end homelessness, and despite all the financial resources and personnel employed in that task, is that the funding process has been controlled by the coalition rather than the CoC. The coalition is a smaller group, primarily composed of nonprofits. These service agencies do not plan outside of their own individual goals and the specific functions of their organizations. Due to the inherent conflicts of interest, they can only be self-sustaining — and as a result, we have not even begun to create a “centralized or coordinated assessment system.”

As Congress and HUD wisely realize, the entire community is needed to create and institute an overarching plan to end homelessness: “The purpose of the Continuum of Care program is to promote community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness” (45422).

Due to the lack of transparency and accountability demonstrated by the coalition and its executive director, I join with members of the Volusia County Council in requesting a forensic audit of the coalition. Further, because of the financial and management irregularities and the attempt to block community participation in what should be an entirely public process, I ask the County Council to support de-selecting the coalition as a lead agency.

I believe the coalition has failed to comply with federal regulations, and fear that could result in the loss of already dwindling resources to our county.

I encourage everyone who has an interest in homeless issues in our community — especially if you have been involved in the CoC in the past and quit because of frustration with the lack of progress — to attend the next CoC meeting Friday at 1 p.m. at the Volusia County Health Department, so that we may begin the process of electing an appropriate board and establishing the correct governance of the CoC.

The Continuum of Care is the vehicle that will enable all of us to work together, in the best and most efficient way possible, to help the thousands of people in our community who do not have a safe place to sleep tonight.

McLeish, who is also a board member of H.O.M.E., lives in Ormond Beach.

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20140902/OPINION/140909986/1031/OPINION02?p=3&tc=pg>

Letters to the editor for Tuesday, September 2, 2014

Realistic response to threat

The news has been filled with the advance of ISIS, a Sunni jihadist group that proclaims itself a caliphate. Its takeover of portions of northern Iraq and Syria; its murderous attacks on Shiites, Christians, and Kurds; and the recent beheading of an American journalist have brought on calls for the U.S. to take action. Many claim they are an existential threat to the U.S. ISIS says it is coming after us. U.S. political leaders, so-called military and foreign policy experts, and media chatterboxes are calling on us to take action to prevent this and to preserve our way of life.

This is reminiscent of past calls for action to preserve our way of life: the Vietnam domino theory and the Iraq threat that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. “If we wait for the danger to become clear, it could be too late,” said Vice President Dick Cheney.

Before we take further action against ISIS, with the potential to spend another trillion dollars and destroy tens of thousands of American lives, I would like to offer a “modest proposal.” I suggest the following: the president goes to Congress and asks for a declaration of war against ISIS. In addition, he calls for a reinstatement of the draft and the passage of a war tax to pay for the war. This way, all of us will be invested in the effort to save our way of life. We will no longer ask just our modest volunteer army to sacrifice their lives. And we will no longer run up trillions of dollars of debt, to be paid for by some future generation — we will pay as we go!

Thomas B. Hilburn

Ormond Beach

June 20, 2014

DARK SIDE OF EUROPE

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20140620/OPINION/140629969/1031/OPINION02?p=2&tc=pg>

For the 50 years prior to the last economic crisis, we witnessed much progress, cooperation and unity among European countries. Since then, the continent has been turned upside down. The choice to move to such extreme austerities was a recipe for disasters, which left millions unemployed and in despair — particularly in southern European countries including Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

The banks and Wall Street have become the most powerful institutions in Europe, as well as the rest of the world. They have taken control of almost every government. The governments are quasi-employees of the banks. It appears that democracy has been replaced with a dictatorship of banks and financial institutions. In the recent European elections, the extreme right has shown more strength than ever before. In England and France, the ultra-conservatives received more votes than the other parties.

This is dangerous. It is said that when the left hand becomes weak, the right hand becomes strong. In political terms, the left provides the poor and working people a safety net of basic social justice. The right takes away those programs and squeezes the poor and working class by placing enormous pressure through the austerity process. Another disturbing phenomenon is the animosity that arose in almost every country toward immigrants. This animosity has created divisiveness among the populace and the potential for revolt down the road.

The solution as I see it is to unite the forces of the poor and working class, and through the democratic process replace these governments with a more representative leadership resulting in a more civil, prosperous and peaceful Europe. An outcome of this would also create a more favorable partnership for the United States.

Panos Stroumpis

Daytona Beach Shores

VA DELAYS HAVE DEVASTATING IMPACT

June 19, 2014

William Abbuehl

Daytona Beach *Abbuehl is executive director of Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida.*

VA DELAYS HAVE DEVASTATING IMPACT

I'm responding to U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson's May 25 Florida Voices, "Get to the bottom of veterans' health care scandal."

Recent reports of death, due to the delays in health care attention and outrageous waits at Department of Veterans Affairs' hospitals, are shocking and unacceptable. Unfortunately, it is just one dimension in myriad problems that U.S. veterans face.

For example, an Iraq veteran's claim was denied because the VA medical examiner refused to believe that he was a combat veteran, despite all of the evidence to support his claim.

That claim was denied in January 2012 and to date, the veteran is still awaiting a response from the St. Petersburg VA regional office. The Veterans Legal Advocacy Project of Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida (CLSMF), a nonprofit legal aid firm, is helping him through this process and fighting for his right to benefits.

CLSMF has found that Central Florida veterans need significant assistance fighting for benefits and appealing denials. The VA takes about one year to make determinations and 28 percent of initial claims are wrongly denied.

Veterans stuck in the appeals process for denied benefits confront longer waits — an average of 923 days — for determinations! Waiting for determinations, veterans become homeless, those with mental illnesses worsen, and some have even attempted suicide. These heroes need the assistance of independent attorneys who can organize their claims and make sound legal arguments. CLSMF has successfully argued appeals all the way up to the federal court level for veterans.

In 2013, CLSMF helped 567 veterans with various legal issues and achieved positive outcomes in 82 percent of cases before the VA. The hope is to enrich the lives of those who have served our country and be part of the solution even in the midst of the recent VA hospital scandal.

William Abbuehl

Daytona Beach

Letter to Editor by Carolyn West of Ormond Beach

May 11, 2014 regarding Medicaid Expansion.

"Story Highlighted Need"

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20140511/OPINION/140519940/1031/OPINION02?Title=Letters-to-the-editor-for-Sunday-May-11-2014>

STORY HIGHLIGHTED NEED

Kudos to The News-Journal for the excellent cover story, "Stranded," May 6.

Reporter Skyler Swisher highlighted victims of the Florida Legislature's failure to expand Medicaid coverage to 800,000 uninsured Floridians.

In its wisdom, the Legislature refused to accept money from the federal government to help in caring for these people. Even our local Chamber of Commerce, not to mention our public hospitals, favor Medicaid expansion to cover those individuals caught in the gap between extreme poverty and those who could afford at least minimum health coverage. The feds would have paid 100 percent of the costs for the next three years, and then 90 percent of the costs after that.

Our local state senators, John Thrasher and Dorothy Hukill, told The News-Journal that they worry whether the state could pay that pitiful 10 percent three years from now. Yet these same senators voted for SB 850, which provides vouchers for children from higher-income families to attend private schools. It would take that money away from our public school system.

These same senators were willing to reduce car and truck tag fees back to pre-2009 levels by voting for SB 156, a bill Hukill even co-sponsored. They also voted for new tax subsidies for professional sports franchises (HB 7095). It makes one wonder why these two senators would support these expenditures while at the same time, balk at adequate medical care for so many of our state residents.

If Thrasher and Hukill, along with the rest of the Florida Legislature, are so concerned about how expensive medical care is, they should realize that dealing with medical need before very sick people wind up in hospital emergency rooms is one of the best ways to save money. The Medicaid expansion would have helped do just that.

Carolyn West

Ormond Beach

Ellen Nielsen of Ormond Beach letter to editor May 10, 2014

"Don't perpetuate Cruelty"

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20140510/OPINION/140519937/1031/OPINION02?Title=Letters-to-the-editor-for-Saturday-May-10-2014>

Don't perpetuate cruelty

On May 7, The News-Journal printed a column by Mary Sanchez expressing concern about the "botched" execution of Clayton Lockett in Oklahoma, along with letters from two readers who felt that we should not concern ourselves about the pain suffered by condemned murderers when the lethal injection "cocktail" does not work properly, because the men who were executed committed horrific crimes and did not care about the

suffering of their victims. "Will someone tell me why these monsters ... should not be killed the same way as they killed their victims?" The same writer suggests that we should bring back "Old Sparky," the electric chair, which the state of Florida stopped using after it set one person on fire. In other words, it does not matter if the method used for capital punishment is inhumane, because the purpose of capital punishment is revenge.

How does growing up in a society that legitimizes state-sanctioned killing for revenge affect our children? How can we teach them that deliberate cruelty is never right?

Cruelty breeds cruelty. There is plenty of evidence to show that many murderers were themselves victims of child abuse.

As long as we endorse cruelty and revenge, we will live in a culture of violence. We should consider abolishing capital punishment in Florida, not because we feel sorry for condemned murderers, but because of what it does to us.

Ellen Nielsen

Ormond Beach

Phil Green of Ormond Beach regarding private schools April 27, 2014

"Test Doesn't Impress"

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20140427/OPINION/140429581/1031/OPINION02?Title=Letters-to-the-editor-for-Sunday-April-27-2014>

TEST DOESN'T IMPRESS

I read the Florida Voices column in the News Journal Tuesday, "Give private schools the 'Bethune Test.'" I thought it was a masterpiece of obfuscation and deception, brilliantly concealing the problems with vouchers and public education. The writer makes a totally false argument with his "Bethune Test."

The late, great Mary McLeod Bethune did not go to the state and beg or bribe the Legislature to divert tax dollars collected from business to her school. As correctly stated, she went directly to business leaders and convinced them of the merits of her school. Private schools today can go to these same people in the same manner as she did.

They should not manipulate politicians to divert tax dollars, which the businesses must pay in any case, from public schools to private schools by the means of "vouchers," while allowing the schools to evade standardized tests and other requirements. They then may use the tax dollars to support secular educational programs which I believe to be in violation of the principle of separation of church and state.

Philip Green

Ormond Beach

Solution to homelessness could turn on the details. April 23, 2014

Shannon McLeish of Ormond Beach

Community Voices article

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20140423/OPINION/140429827/0/search>

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McLeish, who is also a board member of H.O.M.E., lives in Ormond Beach.

March 21, 2014 Panos Stroumpis of Daytona Beach Shores Work together for harmony

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20140321/OPINION/140329948/0/search?p=2&tc=pg>

Work together for harmony

I watched the Winter Olympic Games, as I have my whole life. I take great pride in the fact that my Greek ancestors started this phenomenal event. It occurs to me that it is not only

the sports and competition that are important, but the opportunity for the world to demonstrate the human spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood in the most profound way. We can live in peace and respect one another.

I have concluded that it is religion that divides us rather than unites us. War is being waged because our beliefs are different. If we as a global community can accept our differences, we can live with more tolerance and understanding. We owe this to our children.

My appeal is to the religious leaders to organize a spiritual summit every year, inviting all religious leaders and atheists and agnostics to work with what we all have in common and establish tolerance. Many will say that will never happen. I understand the skepticism, but the world is ever-changing.

I see some signs of hope. Pope Francis is different from his predecessors. He's an advocate of peace and reconciliation. Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer changed 180 degrees from her previous position on gay rights after receiving pressure from the business community.

My hope is that the movement toward religious reconciliation works hand in hand with the economy. We may then become a more stable and peaceful world.

Locally we already have an organization, FAITH (Fighting Against Injustice Toward Harmony) that works on the premise of religious groups uniting to achieve a common goal. I congratulate them on their efforts and accomplishments. My dream is to extend this program to an international level with more participation. Positive thinking is the only way to achieve this.

Panos Stroumpis

Daytona Beach Shores

Feb 22 2014 Carolyn West of Ormond Beach "Water's running out"

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20140222/OPINION/140229792/0/search?p=2&tc=pg>

Water's running out

Mac Carraway's column, "Healthy lawns, water can easily co-exist," was interesting to read. It's good to know about the efforts to contain the run-off that lawns and golf courses contribute to polluting our waterways. Carraway asserts hopefully that Florida's "pristine natural resources" will be there for "many future generations to come."

However, his wishful thinking is not a realistic prediction of Florida in the coming years. I try visualizing his image of all those thirsty St. Augustine lawns stretching far into the future, but I am not as hopeful as he is that there will be any sustainable water resources to keep them green, polluted or not.

Carraway seems unaware that Florida is running out of fresh water, and that our aquifers are at nearly half their capacity now.

Imagine our future as the state's population increases, drawing even more water from those aquifers, not to mention the bottled water corporations like Niagara who want to ship our "pristine" supply out of state.

Some people, many with a financial interest in further development, insist that we'll solve these water shortage problems with reclaimed water, desalination, pumping from the beleaguered St. Johns River, etc. Wow — won't those be expensive "healthy" lawns?

Carolyn West

Ormond Beach

January 31, 2014 Marti King of Ormond Beach " BE LEERY OF TRADE PACT

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20140131/OPINION/140139919/0/search?>

[p=2&tc=pg](#)

Be leery of trade pact

President Obama has been talking a lot about the problem of rising income inequality in our country. However, at the same time he is trying to push through the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a "trade" deal that is really a "job suppression" deal. It would only make income inequality much worse.

The TPP is like a North American Free Trade Agreement on steroids. I think that most of us understand, after 20 years of NAFTA and its Central American counterpart, that these deals do nothing to improve the inequality problem. President Obama wants to fast-track authority in order to bypass Congress' ability to debate and amend the pact. The only way to vote on this fast track is "no."

MARTI KING

Ormond Beach

Jan 23, 2014 Ed Flanagan of Ormond Beach "Keeping an Eye on Fracking"

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20140123/OPINION/140129853/0/search>

Keep an eye on fracking

In the Jan. 19 News-Journal article, "Fracking bills moving again in House," we are told that HB 71 would require companies to inform the Florida Department of Environmental Protection of the chemicals they use in the fracking process, and for that information to be forwarded to a national registry. It's important that the chemicals be disclosed.

HB 157 would reportedly allow the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to determine if an exemption from public disclosure should be given to any chemical a company argues needs to be shielded. Really? Let's hope that the final effect will not be to require public disclosure with one bill and, in a companion bill, provide a loophole the size of a drilling machine to nullify publication of the much-needed information.

I have followed the fracking controversy in southern New York and northeastern Pennsylvania for some time. When environmental protection and public health can be jeopardized, public disclosure must trump proprietary concealment. If fracking comes to Florida, let's protect health, land, and water supply — from the beginning.

Edward Flanagan

Ormond Beach

Jan 13, 2014 Joanne Kennedy of Ormond Beach Worried about Water Bottling Plan

<http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20140113/OPINION/140119904/0/search?p=3&tc=pq>

Worried about bottling plan

Are you concerned about the water supply in Florida? You might like to follow what is happening in the state and voice your opinion. Years ago, I remember hearing that water was going to be more expensive than gas. If you go by the current cost of bottled water I guess you could say we are there now.

With the rise of population in the state of Florida and the concern for having enough water to satisfy this growing need, why is the St. John's River Water Management District considering allowing the underground aquifer to be drained by a bottling company? Seems the current and future citizens of Florida are being taken advantage of. Where is the outrage?

Joanne Kennedy

Ormond Beach